REFLECTIONS

ON THE

VICISSITUDES OF TIME,

IN A

LETTER

FROM A

BROTHER TO HIS SISTER.

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A LETTER FROM A BROTHER TO HIS SISTER.

DEAR SISTER,

AS the ſeaſon of the year is again returned, when death, the king of terrors, that enemy to human felicity, viſits the infant of a day, as well as the man of advanced age—attacks the greateſt monarch with the meaneſt peaſant—and deprives us of tender parents and valuable friends. I think it may be profitable to me, and not unacceptable to you, to take a review of former days.

SUCH important changes in life I have been witneſs that I ſhall find ſatisfaction in venting myſelf on this intereſting ſubject. In the compaſs of a few years, what a wide breach hath death made in our connections! and now the mortal parts of our near and dear friends are mingled with the duſt, and become the prey of greedy worms!—Here I pauſe—to indulge the plaintive ſtrains of ſorrow. All the ſoft endearments compriſed in the name of a parent are to us no more; no more ſhall we rejoice together with their agreeable preſence, or be inſtructed by their example, or ſhare in their parental affection. This brings to my mind

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the paſt period, when our family was united like a flock, ſitting around the ſame table, ſleeping under the ſame roof; but now, by the ſovereign Diſpoſer of all events, are diſperſed into ſeparate ſituations. Such alterations and changes in human life, how loudly do they proclaim the inſufficiency of all created good to make us happy, and at the ſame time diſplay the power and excellence of that adorable Being, who is the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever.

It will be well for us, in the iſſue of ſuch painful events, if we find that our faith in the Redeemer, repentance for ſin, holy contempt of the world, love to God, and benevolence to mankind, have remained unmoved: If it be thus, we poſſeſs a treaſure that no external cauſe can deprive us of, my ſiſter. Although our earthly parents be removed, we have an heavenly Father who ever lives, and all his glorious perfections ſtand engaged to make us bleſſed. His wiſdom, power, and love, can bring that to paſs for thy good, O chriſtian, which no human friend, how well affected ſoever to thy intereſt, can perform for thee. He is the immortal Spring of true felicity to the objects of his love, even when all created ſources of joy fail.

In a little time it will be with us as with our deceaſed relatives. Death will change our countenances, and ſend us away, and we ſhall no longer be numbered among the inhabitants of the earth. But, bleſſed be God, this fluctuation of mortal affairs ſhall come to an end: Death ſhall not for ever triumph over the ſons of men; his imperious reign muſt ſhortly expire, and his priſoners be ſet at liberty. Were the views and proſpects of chriſtians confined to this earth only, they would of all men be the moſt miſerable;

miſerable; but the glorious goſpel, like the riſing ſun, hath ſcattered the diſmal gloom, and brought light and life to the world; and hath ſet the bleſſings of eternity before us, as the great object of our attention and purſuit: It directs our mind forward to a ſtate of immortal honour and eternal bleſſedneſs, and one day (delightful thought!) parents ſhall ceaſe to mourn for their children, and children for their parents; huſband for wife, and wife for huſband; the ſervant ſhall be free from his maſter.

HUMAN nature, the workmanſhip of the Deity, ſhall not always lie under the effects of the apoſtaſy, and be ſubjected to pain, diſorder, ſin and death. He who cannot deceive, aſſerts, that a period ſhall commence, when glory and light ſhall reſt upon the children of grace; when angels ſhall rejoice in victory obtained over ſatan. Did they rejoice and ſhout with joy and praiſe when this ſtupendous frame of nature was finiſhed? much more will they rejoice in the full accompliſhment of the bleſſings of redemption to the elect.

NUMEROUS paſſages of ſacred ſcripture inform us, that God will one day appear in judgment, to fully glorify thoſe who love him, and puniſh his enemies: In a little time the enthroned arch-angel ſhall "ſwear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time ſhall be no longer." The ſun ſhall then ſhine no more, and the moon ſhall withdraw her ſhining; the fields ſhall no more retain their verdure, nor the valleys their flowery pride. Before the glory of Immanuel they ſhall all fade away; then ſhall the deſpiſed Jeſus, who, when he dwelt in mortal fleſh, had not where to lay his head, who ſtood condemned at Pilate's bar,

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and was crucified as a common malefactor, come in the clouds of heaven, with angels for his attendants, in all the glory of his Deity: at his voice, the sea and the earth give up their dead; then will the glories of our Judge more fully appear, to the astonishment and admiration of the whole world.

MAY we, in that awful day of final discrimination, be found of him in peace, while numbers will be sent away to the abodes of everlasting sorrow and despair! May we arise by grace divine to all the privileges and joys of eternal life, and so be ever with the Lord!

UNDER the impression of these thoughts I would propose the following reflections:

FIRST, How dreadful is the state of those persons whose portion is only in this life; who have no relish for the intellectual pleasures that arise from religion, nor discover any beauty or excellency in devotion! the whole creation is at war with such, as being rebels against their Lord and Sovereign, and who must shortly, if divine goodness prevent not, lie down in sorrow.

SECONDLY, How happy and blessed is the state of a true christian! He is one who is the subject of a divine principle, which is glory in the bud. He acts from motives different from those of other men. The glory of God, and interest of his fellow-creatures lie near his heart. It is his ambition to be like his God. To exalt his Saviour is the grand end of all his actions. He hath holy contentment of soul. He is in every state content; acknowledges at all times his dependence upon God; and hath that peace of mind which passeth

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all understanding: and in some moments of his pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan, he hath such sensible manifestations of the love of God to his soul, such transporting prospects of his future inheritance, that the ardent wish of his soul is to "depart and be with Christ." This was the joyful experience of some of our fellow-travellers, who have now reached their wished-for home; they are now drinking, at the fountain, of that living water, of which they only tasted here below. Behold the believer at death conflicting with his last enemy; beneath him are everlasting arms of divine love and power, able to conduct him to his home.

THIRDLY, What little reason is there for lamenting the loss of those of our friends who have died in the faith of the gospel. They are freed from mortal cares; in the nearest communion with God, dressed in robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, and employed in the highest acts of devotion. Surely our hearts should be no more affected with sorrow at their removal, since they are gone to that place to which we are desirous of arriving. Let us say, "the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," who doeth according unto his will in the armies of heaven, and so amongst the inhabitants of the earth.

FOURTHLY, Let the sense of our own mortality stir us up to diligence in seeking the substantial blessings of eternity. Here we are employed in a good cause, that calls for our warmest love and zeal. Let the men of this world despise our choice, yet will we glory in being the followers of Him who spake as never man spake. Let us rejoice in that we possess that

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good part which ſhall never be taken away; which is infinitely ſuperior to the greateſt bleſſings of the preſent life; "for what is a man profited, although he may gain the whole world, if he loſe his own ſoul?" May we be borne above all mortal fear, having an intereſt in him who is the Reſurrection and the Life! May we, with fortitude of mind and compoſure of ſpirit, commit our all into his hands, and when our immortal ſpirits are emancipated from this houſe of bondage, may we find ourſelves in the company of adoring angels and glorified ſpirits, to unite in their exalted praiſes, and ſhare in their unknown joys!

"Now unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to preſent us faultleſs before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wiſe God our Saviour, be glory and dominion, now and for ever! Amen."

I remain

Your affectionate Brother,

W. W.

BRITISH MUSEUM 9 JY 74